

THE OTHER GUNS AND ROSES

Mike: 23-year-old, male, Active Duty E-4, deceased by suicide (gunshot)

Jessica: 21-year-old, female, civilian, deceased by homicide (gunshot)

Brief Summary of Events and Relevant History:

On a Saturday in October Jessica's father found Mike and Jessica dead in the master bedroom of their home at approximately 1630 when he stopped by to check on them because no one had been able to reach them all day. Jessica was lying in the bed and Mike was lying on the floor near the bed. Each had been shot to death with a single gunshot to the head, and a handgun was found at the scene. This loaded weapon was kept by Mike in the drawer of the nightstand. Mike was an active duty USAF E4 stationed at an Army installation. Autopsy shows that both Jessica and Mike had been drinking alcohol (BAL 0.16 and 0.21, respectively).

The unit Mike was assigned to reportedly had a sustained high ops tempo over the past year. The month prior to the event, Mike was TDY to Las Vegas, NV. During this time it appears that Mike may have been gambling using money withdrawn from his GTC account as well as his overdrawn personal bank account (GTC account balance at time of death was \$3141.18). Many co-workers indicated in interviews with OSI that they were aware that Mike liked to gamble. Some may have gambled with him while TDY.

OSI interviews conducted after the event reveal conversations that Mike had with co-workers where he discussed divorce and marital problems. It was reported that Mike had commented "I'd rather kill my wife than get a divorce;" however his friend perceived this comment as a joke. It was also disclosed by several co-workers that Mike would consume 12-20 beers at time on a regular basis. Co-workers never reported this behavior to leadership. Buddies described him as a "Big Ol' Bubba who could handle his liquor." Mike was also reported to be the "jealous-type" and did not like it when Jessica would have contact with male friends. Jessica grew up near their current assignment so she had many male and female friends from high school with whom she still hung out.

Sometime prior to the event his Commander directed Mike to get marital counseling. Mike's supervisor told the Commander Mike and Jessica completed marital counseling but there is no record of Mike's counseling. Also, there is no indication that the supervisor confirmed this fact with anyone other than Mike.

One day 14 months prior to the incident, Mike did not report to work. Mike's supervisor went to his home and brought him to work. The supervisor smelled alcohol on Mike's breath. He was escorted to the ER for a breathalyzer which was "negative". Mike reported he and his wife had been up all night, fighting, and his wife had punched him in the side. This incident was never reported to Family Advocacy. He received an LOC for arriving late to work. In spite of this incident and even though numerous individuals in the work place knew of his heavy drinking, there was never a referral to ADAPT.

WHERE WAS THE WINGMAN?

Please discuss this scenario in small groups and identify each wingman who might have intervened to prevent this tragedy. Be prepared to share your findings with the larger group.

Note to Facilitator: Break the audience into small groups of 5 or 6 members. Hand out “The Other Guns and Roses” Scenario to each group. Ask them to read the scenario and answer the question at the bottom of the page. Each group should document their findings on the back of the scenario. Tell the group that this scenario is based on a true AF fatality case. This exercise is designed to help AF communities learn from such tragedies to prevent future similar outcomes. As the groups report their findings, use the list below to ensure each Wingman is identified and all learning points are discussed.

- Supervisor (wingman) should have followed up and verified with the marital counselor that Mike and Jessica had in fact attended marriage counseling as directed by his Commander (wingman).
- Wingmen need to be educated that “extreme jealousy” and “threats to kill,” whether direct or indirect, are very potent lethality risk factors and should always be reported to leadership so that assistance can be offered.
- Problems with gambling can be devastating financially and can destroy careers and marriages. When friends or co-workers (wingmen) notice possible indicators of any type of addiction or abuse those concerns should be reported to leadership.
- Commander/1st Sgt (wingman) should have a lower threshold for making ADAPT referrals. The fact that he was known by many co-workers (wingmen) to consume 12-20 beers in an evening on a regular basis should have been reported to leadership. Smelling of alcohol and not showing up for work is reason enough for an ADAPT evaluation. ADAPT is trained to do a thorough assessment and will only make a diagnosis of alcohol abuse/dependence if it is warranted. A referral to ADAPT for evaluation does not automatically mean you have a problem with alcohol/drugs. They also offer education/prevention services.
- Recommend that special attention/support be given to units that have sustained high-ops tempo. Preventive briefings from ADAPT, FAP Outreach Manager, Mental Health, etc.
- Geographically separated or tenant units may be at increased risk due to different military cultures which may not offer the same sense of community and support as one might get from their own branch of Service. For example, there may be reluctance to refer Air Force individuals to Army Services.
- Although the physical abuse incident/allegation seemed minor, a referral for a FAP assessment may have uncovered more serious issues, may have indicated the physical aggression was bi-directional, or at least provided an opportunity for FAP to offer the couple prevention services. FAP would have asked about weapons in the home and likely would have recommended the weapon be temporarily removed from the home.
- Safety briefings should include the dangers of easily accessible, loaded weapons when individuals are drinking alcohol. In such households, simple marital disagreements can quickly become lethal incidents.